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Tuesday, 30 May 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Rosselli	(Uruguay)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Fesko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Klein

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen; Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Ms. Radhya Al-Mutawakel, of the Mwatana Organization For Human Rights.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you very much, Sir, for the opportunity to brief the Council on the latest developments in the Yemeni peace process.

Tragically, the violence continues on numerous fronts, deepening the suffering of the Yemeni people. Much of the violence has focused on the western coastline of Taiz governorate, where pro-Government forces are attempting to make progress from Al-Dhubab and Al-Mokha towards Hudaydah port and inland towards Taiz city. An assessment mission carried out by humanitarian agencies in early April found that Al-Dhubab town was largely empty due to widespread destruction of infrastructure and contamination by unexploded ordnance and landmines. In Al-Mokha town, an estimated 40 per cent of houses and infrastructure have been damaged by the fighting.

Violence has also continued in Hajjah governorate and the border area between Yemen and Saudi Arabia. There has been a significant escalation of violence in Taiz, including intensified shelling from 21 to 23 May by forces allied with Ansar Allah and Ali Abdullah Saleh, leading to the deaths and injury of tens of civilians and significant damage to civilian infrastructure in the city. The shelling of civilian areas and civilian infrastructure is a serious violation of international humanitarian law.

Air strikes have hit numerous other locations in the country. On 29 March, an air strike in Saada governorate reportedly killed 12 civilians, including several children. In addition, ballistic missiles were fired into Saudi territory. The persistent military action is leading to an increased militarization of the Yemeni population, the extensive proliferation of weapons and widespread use of deadly landmines. The terrible scenes witnessed on the west coast and other areas of the country show yet again how the conflict is laying waste to the civilian population, its homes and livelihoods. The parties must urgently come together to prevent the deepening of the catastrophic situation.

I will not hide the fact that we are nowhere close to reaching a comprehensive agreement from the Council. The reluctance of the key parties to embrace the concessions needed for peace, or even discuss them, remains extremely troubling. Yemenis are paying a price for their needless delay.

As the holy month of Ramadan begins, we must remember that 7 million Yemenis are at risk of famine unless the conflict ends. A quarter of Yemenis cannot afford food on the local market. Half of Yemen's population lacks access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene services, thereby increasing the risk of infectious diseases. The most recent outbreak of cholera has led to more than 500 deaths and over 60,000 suspected cases in 19 governorates. The rapid spread of the disease has been aggravated by an inadequate health-care system. Fewer than 45 per cent of medical facilities are functioning and medicines for diabetes, hypertension, cancer and other chronic diseases are in short supply. As the World Health Organization has underlined, Yemenis are dying not just from violence; the violence, lack of salaries and the loss of their livelihoods prevents them from receiving the basic treatment they need to survive.

So far, we have managed to avert military action in Al Hudaydah. The spread of fighting to the city would lead to a devastating loss of civilian life and infrastructure. It would threaten the flow of food and medical supplies through the port and bring further suffering to the Yemeni people. I made it clear to the parties during my recent meetings with the Government of Yemen and with political leaders in Sana'a that they must reach a compromise on the situation in Al

Hudaydah, in order to prevent such a horrific scenario. I regret that the delegation of Ansar Allah and the General People's Congress in Sana'a did not meet with me to discuss the framework for such an agreement.

My proposal, which includes security, economic and humanitarian elements, would allow for the continued flow of commercial and humanitarian supplies and ensure the end of any diversion of customs revenues and taxes so that they could be used to support salaries and services rather than the war or for personal benefit. Agreement between the parties on those issues will safeguard the population of Al Hudaydah against further harm and preserve commercial and humanitarian supply chains and the payment of salaries.

I have proposed an agreement that would prevent military clashes in Al Hudaydah and should be negotiated in parallel with an agreement to ensure the resumption of salary payments nationally to all civil servants. The lack of salary payments is driving millions of Yemenis into destitution. Such an agreement would require mechanisms to ensure that all State revenues, whether collected in Al Hudaydah, Sana'a, or elsewhere, are used in support of salary payments and the preservation of essential Government services in all areas of the country. I call on all parties to engage with me, without delay, on the basis of my proposal. Salary payments are possible only through an agreement between the Yemeni parties. It requires cooperation and negotiations about the use of existing resources in the country rather, than the scapegoating of the United Nations.

In parallel with efforts to avoid destructive conflict, we must also preserve systems that can serve the Yemeni people now and in the future. I am grateful to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the World Bank for organizing a conference to discuss urgent measures to support Yemen's economy and State institutions, as well as its longer-term recovery and reconstruction. I praise the work of the World Bank, UNICEF and local Yemeni institutions in restarting cash assistance to the poorest families through existing distribution social safety mechanisms. Such mechanisms will be a vital boost for household purchasing power and will help millions of Yemenis keep their children out of the growing ranks of the malnourished.

Commercial importers currently lack access to the financing required to sustain imports of essential goods, in particular during the holy month of Ramadan. I welcome efforts to create a trade finance facility that will allow commercial importers access to the hard currency that they need in order to pay for imports. That will ensure the continued availability of key commodities in Yemeni markets and will prevent the degradation of supply chains, allowing for more rapid economic recovery in the long term. That effort is just a part of a dynamic and innovative collaboration between the World Bank and the United Nations, which is unprecedented in scale and in the rapidity of its deployment. I am confident that it is having a positive impact today on the lives of Yemenis and will help to ensure a more rapid and stable recovery following the conflict.

The prospect of economic recovery and stability is still a distant prospect for most Yemenis and the country continues to be fertile ground for extremist groups. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula operations have persisted in several governorates, including Hadramout, Aden, Al-Dhali, Ma'reb and Shabwa. The absence of stability, economic opportunity and rule of law means that Yemen will continue to be a haven for such groups unless there is lasting peace.

I would like to express my deep concern regarding recent reports from Yemen of efforts to suppress and undermine the work of journalists, human rights activists and civil society, including harassment, beatings, arbitrary detention and trials without due process. I am particularly worried by the sentencing to death of Yahya Al-Jubayhi, a prominent Yemeni journalist, by a court run by the Houthis and General People's Congress on 12 April. I am also concerned by the arbitrary arrest and threats to the safety of members of the Baha'i community. The parties must uphold their obligation to respect the integrity of civil society and allow such actors to carry out their valuable work without fear of threat or intimidation. They must also allow religious minorities to live without fear of persecution.

I must highlight the important and effective role that Yemeni women continue to play in resolving conflict and in contributing to the vision for lasting peace and reconciliation, despite the atmosphere of violence and increasing risks to their safety. During my visit to Sana'a, I had the pleasure of meeting representatives of the Yemeni Women Pact for Peace and Security, which brings together Yemeni women from different political parties, as well as independent members of civil society. The meetings, which were convened by UN-

Women, discussed issues that are central to the current conflict in Yemen, including the economic crisis, political deadlock and the possibility of preventing an attack against Al Hudaydah. The members discussed mechanisms to increase women's inclusion in the peace negotiations and the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

Yemeni women, civil society and political leaders have also been meeting regularly in discussions on the peace process and the future of the transition. I am very grateful for the efforts of Germany and the Berghof Foundation for hosting the events that will help Yemenis build consensus on their way to a return to a peaceful, orderly transition that meets the aspirations of Yemen's people.

During the past two months, the demands of the southern governorates for greater autonomy have become more prominent. Such calls demonstrate once again the urgent need for a peace agreement so that Yemenis can engage in discussions to finalize the Constitution, agree on a framework for addressing past injustices and prepare for the election of a Government that puts the country on the path towards recovery and prosperity. Yemenis across the country have been worn out by the conflict.

My meeting with an inspiring group of youth activists in Sana'a last week reminded me of the great Yemeni hopes for political transition before the war. The hopes of those young women and men for the resolution of issues have been ignored for too long. We discussed the political and security challenges facing Yemen, as well as the cholera outbreak. In my discussions with those members of civil society, women and youth groups proposed very practical ideas, including opening the Sana'a airport for civilian flights and urgent demands for the thousands of students and Yemenis requiring urgent medical treatment throughout the country. The demands of those young people are just, logical, inspiring and practical.

I very much regret to inform the Council that the call for peace from Yemeni women, civil society and the international community is still falling on deaf ears. An agreement on Al Hudaydah and salaries should represent a first step towards a national cessation of hostilities and renewed discussions on a comprehensive agreement. Yet, serious negotiations on those first steps have been slow to start.

I am deeply concerned by the attack on my convoy while traveling from the airport to the United Nations compound on 22 May. Such an incident cannot be ignored, and I call on the local authorities to conduct a full and transparent investigation into the attack and hold those responsible for the attack to account. Despite its gravity, it has increased my determination to continue with my efforts to fmd a negotiated political settlement that best serves the interests of the Yemeni people.

I urge the Council to strongly convey to the parties that they need to engage immediately with the United Nations to agree on steps to avoid further bloodshed, halt the slide towards famine and recommit to a peaceful end to the war. The humanitarian crisis and the threat of famine are entirely man-made. If the conflict stops, then Yemenis and their partners in the international community will have the capacity and the will to rebuild the country. With the unified backing of the international community, the path towards peace has been clearly laid out for the parties involved.

I take this opportunity to remind this Council of the thousands of Yemenis who have lost their lives for no other reason than paying the price of a war between their leaders. I would also like to remind the Council of the millions of Yemeni victims affected by man-made hunger, violence and famine. I appeal to the parties to stop fighting for power and instead to strive to build a country that respects the rights of all its citizens — a country with a prosperous economy and strong institutions for all Yemenis just as Yemenis deserve.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Ahmed for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien (United Kingdom): I would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen for his briefing, with which I completely align.

The people of Yemen are being subjected to deprivation, disease and death as the world watches. That is not an unforeseen or coincidental result of forces beyond our control. It is a direct consequence of actions of the parties and supporters of the conflict. It is also sadly a result of inaction, due to inability or indifference, by the international community.

As I have previously briefed the Council in recent months, urgent action is required in order to end the suffering. Yet, based on facts and, as ever, in complete

candour, I return to the Council to report that the situation on the ground has continued to spiral towards total social, economic and institutional collapse. Yemen now has the ignominy of being the world's largest food security crisis, with more than 17 million people who are food insecure, 6.8 million of whom are one step away from famine. Crisis is not coming. It is not looming. It is here today, on our watch. Ordinary people are paying the price.

Worse still, the threat of famine is driven and exacerbated by conflict. Yemen is not facing a drought. If there were no conflict in Yemen, there would be no descent into famine, misery, disease and death. A famine would certainly be avoidable and averted. We all know that there will be no military solution. And for as long as it takes until a political solution is found, we will continue as humanitarians to do everything in our power in order to avert the famine in Yemen, despite the challenges to our operations by all sides and their supporters.

While the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism has facilitated the transfer of over 7.6 million metric tons of goods through Yemen's Red Sea ports, of which 3.8 million metric tons were food, people's ability to buy food is diminishing. We are working hard to enhance the Mechanism and get it funded. In particular, governorates in which active fighting and airstrikes continue, such as Taiz, Hajjah, Sa'ada, Al-Jawf and Marib, remain affected by high and rising prices of commodities. The prices of red beans and wheat flour were 59 per cent and 29 per cent higher in April than they were pre-crisis. The economy is collapsing, employment has all but disappeared, food and fuel prices have skyrocketed and severe disruptions to fishing and agricultural production continue. The bottom line is that what food there is is largely unaffordable to the vast majority of the population, especially the most vulnerable, such as the 2 million people who remain internally displaced.

It is not just the food security situation. The institutional capacity of Yemen to respond to the basic needs of the population is crumbling, exacerbated by the failure of the Central Bank, following its move from Sanna'a to Aden, to operate in the interests of the people it is intended to serve. All parties to the conflict in Yemen have proven their continued inability to put the genuine needs of the Yemeni people first. The health-care system is a shell of what it once was, with half of all health facilities now closed. People are dying because even basic medical treatment, which we would take for granted, is no longer available. By the time I finish my statement to the Council today, another child in Yemen will have died from a preventable disease.

Over 1 million civil servants have not been paid for months, which has affected more than 8 million people and pushed more and more families towards poverty and starvation. Families are increasingly marrying off their young daughters in order to have someone else care for them. They often use the dowry to pay for basic necessities. While humanitarians have been working to assist the poorest of the poor, it is now also professionals, such as university professors, who are asking for food assistance. As the crisis continues, pressure on already scarce humanitarian resources will increase and survival for Yemenis will become harder. It will be difficult for Yemen to recover.

The strain being placed upon the all-too-fragile Yemeni system became all too evident in the past month, with the extensive, desperate resurgence of cholera. The debilitated health system took longer to detect cholera warning signs because the health workers who would normally have been maintaining disease surveillance systems were not paid. Water and sanitation systems were not functioning, owing to lack of fuel and basic maintenance, leaving more than 8 million people without access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

The combination of the rainy season and the uncollected rubbish that has piled up in the streets of large cities has created the perfect conditions for the rapid spread of communicable and water-borne diseases. In the past month alone, twice as many people are suspected of being cholera cases compared to those in the last six months combined, and one third of them are children. It is important to bear in mind that malnutrition and cholera are interconnected, because weakened and hungry people are more likely to contract cholera and less able to survive it. Estimates are projecting 150,000 cases over the next six months, in addition to the roughly 60,000 current suspected cases since April, with 500 associated deaths.

As well as being depressingly predictable, the scale of the latest outbreak is a direct consequence of the conflict. Had the parties to the conflict cared, it would have been avoidable. Nonetheless, I should praise the extraordinary speed and courage of the United Nations and its humanitarian partners, including international and national aid workers from non-governmental

organizations, who are doing all they can under the strong leadership of Humanitarian Coordinator Jamie McGoldrick.

The United Nations and its partners are working tirelessly to help authorities on all sides meet the challenge posed by this cholera outbreak, from Aden to Sa'ada and from Hudaydah to Taiz. We have worked urgently to scale up assistance, quadrupling the number of diarrhoea treatment centres in the past month and establishing 136 oral-rehydration corners. Synchronized water, sanitation and health efforts, including a nationwide awareness campaign, are in place with a view to ensuring a comprehensive and holistic response. Some 1.6 million people have already been supported through those interventions and we will not cease our efforts until the scourge of cholera is contained. I salute the local health and sanitation workers, who are trying to support all and taking no sides regardless of the warring parties' contemptible attempts to get them to do so. Together with the United Nations and other partners, they are providing round-the-clock assistance, and I would also like to thank those who have provided financial support, including from the region, to make that happen.

The humanitarian response to the cholera outbreak is one part of a much larger effort. In all, humanitarians have reached 5.8 million people this year with food assistance, including at least 3 million people every month. As the needs mount, we will need more resources, but our ability to respond is dependent on sustained and predictable funding. As the Council is aware, on 25 April the Secretary-General, together with the Foreign Ministers of Sweden and Switzerland, co-hosted a high-level pledging conference for Yemen to respond to the increasingly acute needs in the country. The conference generated $1.1 billion in very generous pledges.

We are grateful to all the donors who have made good on their pledges in full and encourage others to do the same. As of last night, 56 per cent, about $612 million of the pledges, had been paid both within and outside the humanitarian-response plan. That means that the overall humanitarian strategy and plan is only 24 per cent funded, with $489 million received of the $2.1 billion required. I strongly urge that we ensure that funding is provided in support of the humanitarian strategy and plan, since it is the most effective, neutral and impartial way to reach those most in need. With escalating needs, we will need more resources.

Let me now turn to the issue of access. Hudaydah port is a lifeline for Yemen, being the primary point of entry for commercial and humanitarian imports into the country, which has historically been between 80 and 90 per cent dependent on imported food staples. Hudaydah is also the only port in Yemen that can handle fuel, bulk and containerized cargo at scale. Yet vessels have only intermittent access to it, owing to diversions and clearance delays imposed by the coalition, which, coupled with the risk of attacks on the port, has sapped traders' confidence. Where it has normally taken a week to get into the Red Sea ports, it now often takes five times as long. Given the rising costs, major shipping companies are now simply avoiding the ports, thereby depriving the Yemeni people of desperately needed food and fuel.

I appeal to Member States to ensure that every effort is made to keep Hudaydah port open and operating. An attack on it is not in the interests of any party, as it will directly and irrevocably drive the Yemeni population further into starvation and famine. In that regard, we continue to support the efforts of the Special Envoy to develop a sustainable solution for the protection of the port as critical civilian infrastructure. In addition, bringing in the United Nations mobile cranes that have been stuck for the last four months in Dubai would be an investment in Hudaydah port's civilian character, and would help to get food and fuel to those most in need.

Aside from Hudaydah, the parties must commit to ensuring that all other ports and land routes are open for both humanitarian and commercial imports, as humanitarian action alone cannot meet the needs of a population of 27 million people. Access across the country, including in Taiz governorate, must be safe, consistent and unimpeded, and commercial goods must be allowed to reach Yemen's ports without artificial delays and corrupt exactions. It is also imperative that commercial flights to Sana'a resume in order to enable civilians to seek medical treatment and families to reunite.

Time is running out. The Yemeni people face a triple threat of armed conflict, famine and deadly disease that has already killed, injured, displaced or otherwise affected millions, and it will spare no one if it continues unchecked. The cruel irony, as I said at the beginning, is that these threats are man-made and could easily have been prevented. The international community, in concert with those parties to the conflict, now has an urgent duty to address those threats and bring Yemen

and its people on all sides of the fighting lines back from the brink of complete disaster.

As humanitarians, we will continue to do our job, but the Yemeni people also need the international community to do its job. A sustainable political agreement is the only long-term solution, and if it is to be achieved, there must be a reduction in violence, an end to violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, and unimpeded access to those in need. The parties to the conflict and the international community, especially the Security Council, cannot allow the deadly combination of violence, inaction and indifference to condemn the Yemeni people to a bleak obituary.

I call on the international community to immediately undertake the following actions to avoid irreversible consequences that will have a generational impact on Yemen and the wider region. The first is to ensure the protection of the Yemeni people. For as long as military actions continue, all parties must comply with international humanitarian and human rights law, and all States must exert their influence to ensure that the parties do so. The second is to ensure that all ports and land routes remain open for both humanitarian and commercial imports, including working to avoid attacks on Hudaydah and to reopen Sana'a airport. We need the mobile cranes at the port. The third is to preserve essential Yemeni institutions and ensure that civil servants are paid. This is no longer just a question of politics or economics; it is about basic humanity, human dignity and, indeed, survival.

Cholera is spreading at an unprecedented rate and famine is knocking at the door of millions tonight. The parties to this conflict and their allies, as well other countries in the region and across the globe, must set aside politics and self-interest and respond at the most humane level, facilitating access and mobilizing resources to treat the cholera outbreak and ensure that food gets to those in need. In that spirit, I urge the parties, with the support of the international community, to redouble their efforts to reach a sustainable political settlement, ensuring that the people's protection, dignity and well-being are at the heart of any agreement. Working together, we can end one of the world's great humanitarian tragedies and put Yemen back on a path to survival and a future. The time is now.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Al-Mutawakel.

Ms. Al-Mutawakel: I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to bring the voice of civil society to the Security Council. Many Yemenis hope that the Council can have a positive impact on their war-weary lives.

I have come here from forgotten Yemen, overburdened by bearing witness to the grave human suffering that millions of Yemenis have endured as a result of the war. My country is in a state of total collapse.

On my shoulders, I bear the weight of the stories that have been gathered over the last three years by the Mwatana Organization for Human Rights. Mwatana operates across Yemen in extremely difficult and complicated conditions, and we do everything possible to document and give voice to the victims and survivors of human rights violations that are happening daily by all parties to the conflict in all parts of the country. One of Mwatana's goals is to build a human rights memory that will provide the foundation for future justice and accountability for the people of Yemen. Most Yemenis are not involved in the war and do not have anything to do with military activity. The most common refrain we hear from people in our field work is "We hate war. We want to live."

War in Yemen did not happen suddenly. It is the result of accumulated mistakes by all parties over the past years. However, there are real opportunities to end this war and achieve a fair settlement that puts Yemenis on track to build a State grounded in the rule of law. For those who counted on war to bring solutions, what has war achieved except thousands of civilians killed and injured, many of them women and children? War has destroyed the basic and limited infrastructure that Yemen took decades to assemble. War led to the collapse of the health system. War is stopping hundreds of thousands of Yemeni children from going to school, undermining the development of an entire generation. Hundreds of children are forcibly recruited to serve in the front lines. War has led to a humanitarian crisis that is so acute that famine is imminent. Millions are invisibly internally displaced, and recently an outbreak of cholera has infected thousands of Yemenis.

If we put a lens closer on Yemen, we could easily catch the terrifying absence of State institutions in areas controlled by de facto authority of the Houthi Ansar Allah armed group and its ally, former President Saleh, as well as in areas controlled by the authority

of President Hadi and parties and armed groups allied with him. Yemenis aspire to a strong Administration capable of providing security and basic services. Instead, they have only found armed groups engaged in conflict over power at their expense. War is providing an ideal environment for extremist groups to take hold and flourish. These groups have been working tirelessly through the war to consolidate their power at the local level. They are virtual landmines in Yemen's future and they cannot be weakened unless a state of law and order exists.

Yemenis today need the international community and the Security Council to fulfil their responsibilities to protect them. Throughout the past three years of war, all parties to the conflict have committed grave violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. This cannot be allowed to continue unchecked.

The Mwatana Organization for Human Rights has documented grave violations by the Saudi and Emirates-led coalition that has brought about the killing of thousands of civilians, mostly women and children. This coalition has struck residential compounds, public markets, cultural and heritage sites, hospitals, schools, bridges and factories. We have also documented extensive violations by Ansar Allah armed groups and their ally former President Saleh, especially in Taiz, including the use of landmines in different areas in Yemen. Furthermore, we have documented violations, including extrajudicial executions by the forces of President Hadi and parties and armed groups allied with him. Both sides share responsibility for the indiscriminate shelling of civilians and civilian facilities, recruitment of children, denial of humanitarian access, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture, violations of freedom of speech and the disappearance of a free press, harassing minorities, such as Bahais, and other grave violations.

This war is taking the greatest toll on Yemeni women, who have become prime civilian targets for all warring parties. They have lost their breadwinners, forcing them to suffer an even greater level of poverty than was evident before the conflict. Women are living an increasingly dangerous and insecure situation that restricts their movement and ability to fight poverty. Scenes of mothers, wives and daughters running from one prison to another in hope of hearing something about their detained and forcibly disappeared loved ones has been one of the hardest things to witness in this war. The people of Yemen look to the international community to ensure accountability for these serious violations of international law. Yemenis expect to see serious steps taken to restore their confidence in the capacity of the United Nations to maintain peace and security and promote justice.

During war, peacebuilding becomes an act of courage and bravery. I call on the Security Council to come together to revive the peace talks so there can be an end of this senseless war. I call on the Security Council to support the Special Envoy for Yemen to be strong in the face of warring parties and to impress an inclusive peace plan that is not biased by the vision of one party alone. I call for the comprehensive inclusion of all Yemeni parties in the peace talks and to give ample space for the participation of civil society, women and youth. I call on Security Council members to stand beside Yemenis, halt support for any party to the conflict and stop transferring arms to any warring party in the country.

The suffering of Yemenis cannot come to an end unless war ends. Long-term commitments are needed to promote peace. The Security Council also needs to take urgent concrete action to immediately mitigate suffering. These actions will require the Security Council to show courage, commitment and resolve. The Security Council should urgently establish an international independent commission of inquiry to investigate violations by all parties to the conflict, stop the sale of weapons to parties involved in human rights violations in Yemen, demand an end to the targeting of civilians and civilian objects through aerial and ground attacks, ensure the release of civilian detainees who are arbitrarily held and those forcibly disappeared under the authority of the Houthi-Saleh alliance or under the Government of President Hadi and his allies, demand that there be unhindered humanitarian access to all areas and all people in need, ensure that Sana'a International Airport is reopened, insist upon immediate agreement among the parties for a mechanism to pay salaries to public sector employees, protect Hodeida port from the armed conflict and ensure that it is restored to full functionality so it can better meet the needs of millions of Yemenis, and demand that the restrictions on the operation of civil-society organizations are lifted, press freedoms restored and all detained journalists released, especially those who are under Houthi authority.

We have before us an opportunity for the Security Council to take action to protect the people of Yemen

and support us in finding the path to a sustainable peace. Despite the difficulty of the situation on the ground, it is still possible to turn around and chart a path towards peace, democracy and economic development. However, as the war continues, we need to keep in mind that what is possible today might not be possible tomorrow. Urgent action is therefore crucial.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia would like to thank the United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Stephen O'Brien, to whom we express our support for all the efforts he has made to fulfil his mandate, for their briefings. I would also particularly like to thank Ms. Radhiya Al-Mutawakel for her poignant statement that has showed us the face of the grave situation in Yemen.

While the matter that we have come to discuss is an update on the establishment of the peace negotiations as a response to the conflict, we must acknowledge that the situation of the Yemeni people is becoming increasingly alarming and precarious owing to the many elements that are coming together and exacerbating their living conditions. The situation in Yemen is critical and the figures are distressing.

As Mr. O'Brien has been pointing out and as he underscored once again, the total population of Yemen is 27.4 million, more than 18 million of whom require humanitarian assistance and, among them, more than 10 million need extremely urgent assistance. There is also a shortage of food for more than 17 million people who are living in food insecurity, of which 6.8 million are at risk of famine.

Unfortunately, the situation continues to deterioate and the Yemeni people now has to deal with an outbreak of cholera, which according to the 18 May report of the World Health Organization, has led to 361 deaths in April and May and has spread to 19 of the 22 provinces that make up Yemen. According to the 24 May communiqué of the Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen, more than 35,000 cases of possible contagion have been recorded. We are therefore very concerned that the humanitarian assistance deployed in Yemen continues to be seriously affected by the imposition of random restrictions by the parties to the conflict, as well as by the constant threat of air attacks on civilian infrastructure, which limits the distribution of humanitarian supplies, which the Yemeni people desperately need.

In the same vein, we regret and condemn the 22 May attack in Sana'a on a humanitarian convoy in which the Special Envoy was also travelling. We remind the parties to the conflict that they must provide unconditional and unrestricted access to humanitarian assistance and ensure that it is secure and not identify humanitarian convoys as military targets for any reason. We also reiterate to the regional actors involved in the conflict that they have the obligation to respect the provisions of resolution 2140 (2014) and that they must do everything possible to commit themselves to establishing a sustainable process for dialogue that will lead to a peaceful, inclusive and orderly political transition that is led by the Yemeni people and that will meet their legitimate rights and aspirations, as well as fully respect Yemen's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

We feel it is important to refer to the words of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al Hussein, who last May in a press conference in Geneva said,

> "The United Nations is concerned about the humanitarian repercussions of such an attack in terms of inflaming the humanitarian crisis even further, let alone our concerns about loss of civilian life were there to be a large-scale attack on port".

We believe that the Council should maintain a unanimous position in speaking out against these belligerent acts and campaigns and against any action that defends the use of violence or weapons as an option to solve this or any other conflict, especially when these war tactics run counter to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which the Security Council stands for. We unequivocally reiterate that the Security Council must send out a clear, quick message with regard to humanitarian assistance and with regard to the port of Hudaydah, which is the only entrance possible for humanitarian assistance for civilian victims who must now deal with not only a food crisis, but also a health crisis which could get worse if these attacks continue.

In conclusion, Bolivia would like to reiterate the three requests made in this meeting by Mr. O'Brien. We listened carefully to what he just said and I picked up on the following. Yemen has been forgotten, as can

be seen in the famine, war, collapsed economy, deadly diseases and attacks on civilians which plague the country. Yemen today is one of the greatest failures of the Council and of our Organization.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Uruguay.

At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Cheikh Ahmed, Mr. O'Brien, and Ms. Al-Mutawakel for their briefings. We reiterate our support for the work being carried out by the Special Envoy and we thank him for his ongoing efforts to find a solution to the conflict.

Uruguay firmly condemns the attack that he suffered during his transfer from the Sana'a airport on 22 May during his official visit to Yemen. An attack on his person is an attack on the United Nations and is therefore unacceptable and must be condemned in the strongest terms. We also extend our deepest gratitude and recognition to the humanitarian agents and institutions in Yemen for their arduous work to bring hope to the civilian population who have been victims of this armed conflict for more than two years.

This open Security Council briefing on the situation in Yemen is not only a forum to address the issue, but it also seeks to give shed light on the cruel reality that the country is suffering and provide an opportunity to express to the thousands of Yemeni men, women and children that they have not been forgotten.

Uruguay supports the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Yemen. The negotiation process and the peace talks are the only way out of the crisis. Uruguay regrets the prolonged stagnation in the peace process, which has not been able to bring about positive results until now. We are most concerned about the fact that none of the parties is demonstrating sustained commitment or interest in achieving a political settlement that would put an end to the conflict. The United Nations and the international community can and must promote peace, but it is the Yemenis themselves who must make their own decisions in order to achieve peace. The stakeholders must acknowledge that they have to make concessions. Uruguay reiterates its call on the parties to resume the dialogue and to fully respect the commitment to a cessation of hostilities, which is fundamental step for the establishment of peace.

To achieve stability in Yemen, actors in the region and those countries that have influence on the parties must commit to working together towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Yemen has been witness to generalized violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law committed by all the warring parties. These violations have been documented in several case studies by groups of experts on Yemen. We congratulate them on their work and we encourage them to continue their work. The parties involved have shown that they are completely unwilling to investigate these horrendous acts. We therefore believe that it is up to the Security Council to establish impartial and transparent investigative mechanisms on international humanitarian law violations that have taken place in Yemen by both parties to the conflict. That is an necessary and essential step to ensuring accountability.

Last week, during the open debate on the protection of civilians and health care in armed conflict (see S/PV.7951), we stressed that civilians continue to pay the highest cost of war. In Yemen, the indiscriminate attacks are creating a real catastrophe. The bombing against civil infrastructure require our full attention and the condemnation of the international community. Those responsible for these aberrant atrocities and their accomplices must be held accountable for those crimes. The traffic and trade in weapons to the warring parties must cease because this directly contributes to the massacre of civilians. The ongoing violence and the dismantling of Yemeni institutions is also enabling terrorism to spread. As has been seen, groups, such as Da'esh and Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, are actively benefiting from the changing political environment and the vacuum in governance to recruit new members and organize new attacks.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, Uruguay is also concerned by the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, in particular the serious situation for the most vulnerable people, such as women and children. The appalling situation and the seriousness of the humanitarian situation for the Yemeni people requires immediate and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance to the civilian population, including through the port of Hudaydah. Access to that port is essential as it is the primary access route for food imports to the country.

Finally, I want to stress that we all share the responsibility of maximizing efforts to bring about peace and to alleviate the suffering of millions of people. We call on all States that can bring influence to

bear upon the parties, to collaborate in the pursuit of a peaceful solution to the conflict.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Alyemany (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your outstanding leadership of the work of the Security Council this month. We thank you sincerely for allowing us to address the Council.

I begin my statement by pledging the full support of the Government and the people of Yemen for the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed. We strongly condemn the assassination attempt against him in the occupied capital of Yemen by the Houthi militias allied to the former President's followers. On Monday, 22 May, the Government of Yemen issued its condemnation of that criminal act targeting the Special Envoy. The group of 18, which sponsors the political operation in Yemen, has also issued a statement strongly condemning that criminal act and calling upon the leaders of the coup to undertake a full investigation of the crime. It came at a time when the Special Envoy carried new proposals to resume peace efforts, including a truce during the holy month of Ramadan, as well as arrangements to hand over the city of Hudaydah to the legitimate Government and the exit of the Houthi militias from the city as a first step towards resuming peace negotiations in Kuwait and signing such understandings.

The Government of Yemen has expressed its initial acceptance of the peace proposals carried by the Special Envoy and its desire to put an end to Yemeni bloodshed. Regretfully, the recent visit of the Special Envoy was met with the intransigence and aggression of the leaders of the coup. Today, on the fourth day of the holy month of Ramadan, we are facing a lost opportunity, with the increasing suffering of the Yemeni people, who are at the mercy of the militias of death.

After more than two years of a coup d'état led by the Houthi militias, in association with the former President, and with the support and incitement of Iran, Yemen is experiencing one of the most horrific humanitarian tragedies. The victims of the coup are on the rise, Yemenis have been displaced to the four corners of the planet, famine has spread as have diseases — the last of which was the dreadful cholera outbreak. Thanks to the support of the international community, Yemen had eradicated cholera in past years.

Today, Yemen is a terrifying scene out of Dante's Divine Comedy, where death prevails in all of its colours and human suffering is the major headline. That is all due to the coup leaders holding on to stolen power and stealing the scarce resources of the Yemeni people. The head of that criminal coup d'état, Abdul-Malik Badreddin Al-Houthi, is sitting in his cave, alleging the holy right to rule while the international community combating terrorism is facing another pretender, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who has established the State of death and terrorism and wrongfully called it the Islamic State.

The terrorism of the Houthi movement, Da'esh, or Al-Qaida, which is controlled by hidden hands in the Iranian intelligence, is turning our lives into a nightmare. They have actually put an end to the dream of Yemenis with the result of the national dialogue conference to establish a democratic federal State. This war has never been the choice of the Yemeni Government, led by President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour. It was imposed upon us after all other peaceful options were exhausted and after we had reached many compromises so as to not endure an indiscriminate war, where the first and last loser would be the great Yemeni people.

Nevertheless, we extend a peaceful hand for a just and comprehensive solution based on the agreed instruments. Locally, regionally and internationally, those are the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and its implementation mechanism and the resolutions of the Security Council — the latest of which is resolution 2216 (2015). That solution would bring genuine peace, instead of temporary peace that would lead to further wars for coup leaders, terrorists and gangs to violate our national sovereignty.

The catastrophic humanitarian situation that my country has been enduring since the rogue coup d'état of the Houthi militias and the followers of the former President requires further attention from the international community. Those gangs, which have forcefully taken power, have brought increased humanitarian suffering and the spread of famine and disease — most recently cholera — which have led to the death of many people.

In that connection, I would like to refer to the excellent outcome of the Geneva Conference of 25 April — under the sponsorship of the Secretary-

General and the Governments of Switzerland and Sweden — aimed at supporting the humanitarian response plan in Yemen for 2017. It raised approximately $1.1 million. In that regard, we call upon all countries that pledged funds to follow through so that we can use the money to combat the cholera and famine in Yemen. So far, only 65 per cent of the pledges have been honoured.

The Government of Yemen, under the leadership of the President, welcomes the Arab and international efforts to combat cholera. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, who has order the King Salman Center for Humanitarian Aid and Relief to make every effort to prevent the spread of cholera, especially since most of the areas where cholera is spread are under the control of the coup d'état forces. They have also provided facilities and medications for 50,000 people and signed an $8 million with the World Health Organization to address the cholera outbreak. It is regrettable and painful that the arrival of the Special Envoy to Sana'a coincided with massacres by the Houthi militias in Taiz, which has been under blockade for two years. It led to the death of 50 innocent civilians, most of them women and children, as well as five journalists — which was met by the appalling silence of the international community.

This is the picture of six-year-old Eliyas Aklan, who was killed by a Houthi-launched missile in Taiz on 23 May. His innocent tears will chase the criminals until justice prevails for him and all innocent children. Eliyas reminds us of another child, Fareed Al-Tharabi, five-years-old, who was killed in another Houthi massacre by a missile launched in Taiz on 13 October 2015. He died crying and pleading with his doctors not to bury him. His story was referred to by the former Permanent Representative of the United States, Ms. Samantha Power.

Taiz continues to experience horrors after two years of an appalling war and the collective punishment of its children and adults, who have rejected the coup d'état. The blockade imposed under the coup d'état has led to further displacement and the daily killing of children, women and the elderly, as well as the indiscriminate bombing of hospitals and residential areas that lack all water, food and medicine.

I call on the human conscience of Council members, in the name of the Government of Yemen, to condemn and criminalize the massacres committed by the Houthi militias and Saleh, as well as the blockade imposed on the city of Taiz and its villages. Day after day, the militia set burn and shell the houses of citizens, forcefully displacing them from their villages. We have never yet heard a call for an end to the blockade.

As the number of child victims climbs, the number of detainees and the forcible disappeared is also on the rise. All the forcibly displaced and detainees are now in the prisons of the coup masters. How many victims, children, detainees and forcibly disappeared does the Council, the United Nations, the Secretary-General and the Special Envoy need before they respond to the suffering of our people and condemn the Houthi killers? How many messages have I sent to the Secretary-General concerning the detainees without a single response? It is as if international humanitarian law has nothing to do with what is being perpetrated by that criminal gang.

The ongoing efforts of the Government of Yemen are focused on rebuilding the liberated zones and pursuing its efforts to get rid of the terrorist gangs, in cooperation with the Saudi-led coalition, the United Arab Emirates and the international community, led by the United States of America. We are striving jointly with the international community and the specialized United Nations agencies to speed the recovery and transition, from the humanitarian-relief stage through reconstruction. The Special Envoy referred to the meeting that was convened in Riyadh by the World Bank and the Government of Saudi Arabia.

We call for assistance to the Government of Yemen in implementing its economic recovery plan in the areas under its control, which constitute 80 per cent of the total territory of Yemen. It is no surprise that the first responder to the calls of His Excellency President Hadi Mansour has been the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which has pledged $10 million, $8 million of which support construction projects in the liberated areas, while the other $2 million are earmarked for the Central Bank of Yemen to prevent the devaluation of the national currency.

In line with efforts to address the deteriorating humanitarian situation, the Government is still working hard to provide salaries to all Government employees, who have not been paid for eight months thanks to the militias, which have stolen all the money from the Central Bank and its reserves. We have provided

salaries in some liberated areas and allocated some funds to areas under the control of the coup d'état. However, the militias have stolen 581 billion rials from the tax revenues and refuse to pay the salaries of those under their control. This has redoubled the humanitarian suffering of the people and made it harder for the Government to remain current in the payment of the salaries of its employees.

To conclude, we reaffirm the Yemeni Government's strong belief that a genuine, effective and sustainable solution to the deteriorating humanitarian and economic situation in Yemen requires efforts to overturn the coup d'état, restore legitimacy and State institutions, and return to normal life. In that regard, we commend the efforts of the Security Council and the Ambassadors of the group of 18 to achieve security and stability in Yemen. We reiterate our sincere thanks and appreciation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and all the Arab coalition countries working to restore legitimacy in Yemen. We call on all members of the Security Council to pursue their unified efforts to end the humanitarian suffering in my country and to take a firm stance against those responsible for the coup and further pressure them to comply with the relevant international resolutions and respect international humanitarian law.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now invite Council Members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.